

Severn Valley Railway announces interim MD

January 24, 2023



The **Severn Valley Railway's** board of directors has announced that its current vice chairman Jonathan 'Gus' Dunster will take over as the company's interim managing director.

This follows the announcement last week that current MD Helen Smith is to leave the railway to work for another organisation.

Gus will be working closely with chairman Mike Ball, other directors and Helen, to ensure a smooth transition in preparation for her departure in late February.

Gus has been an active volunteer at the SVR for more than 30 years, and recently retired from his role as Avanti West Coasts' executive director of operations and safety. A career railway man, he joined British Railways when he left education in 1987.

"The board is delighted that Gus has agreed to take on this responsibility," said SVR chairman Mike Ball. "The SVR faces considerable challenges in 2023, with escalating costs and an expectation that last year's drop in passenger revenue will continue. I believe that Gus will be a steadying force to take us through the uncertainties of the coming year, ensuring that we offer the exciting and value-for-money experience that visitors rightly expect from a leading heritage railway attraction."

“We know that the year ahead is going to be critical for the SVR,” add Gus. “We have many challenges to overcome. However, I’ve been involved here for more than three decades, and I know how dedicated and passionate our volunteers and paid staff are. Our railway is held in high esteem by both heritage enthusiasts and the general public. It’s time to come together and make sure the railway we love can survive and thrive into the future.”

Photo credit: Severn Valley Railway/ Ted Dunster